

# WINTER TYDES



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tyde Warnings - Editorial Susan M. Garrett	2
Repeat Performance - The New Avengers K. Linden	3
Evensong Christy Donne	14
The Letter Edd Vick	16
Network II: An Explanation Guy Brownlee	21
Network II Guy Brownlee	25
Spin Drifts - Letters	45

ART:

John Fox : 19, 44, & back cover.

Guy Brownlee : 34.

Staff:

Editor - Susan M. Garrett

Editor's Editor - Betsy Marshall

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# 16
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First of all, an apology. When I began this silly thing, I promised that I wouldn't print one half of a story in one issue and continue it in the next. Well, my shoes taste fine.... I had a choice; put in one complete story, one and one half stories, or two halves and one whole story. In the interest of pleasing as many people as possible, I opted for the variety.

Therefore, my apologies to Guy and Katie, and to the readers. Sometimes, ya gotta do what 'cha gotta do, eh?

I WANT LETTERS!!!! The zine costs two dollars. If you have something printed in the zine, you get a complimentary copy (that means FREE!!!). If you send in a letter, and we print it, you have something in the zine, therefore you get a complimentary copy. Ergo, free. (Isn't that easy.....)

I WANT ARTWORK!!!! (I'm doing a lot of shouting today, sorry.) SPOT ILLOS, FULL PAGERS, YOU NAME IT, WE WANT IT! And the same goes for the artwork as the letters and the poems and stories (Oh, yeah. We want those too.) You want a free copy, send something in.

WYNTER TYDES  
Susan M. Garrett  
2925A Soledad  
Irving, TX 75062

By the way, what are you people intersted in? Do you want more sword and sorcery? Game aids and/or articles? Media related stories (any in particular?)? Or just plain silliness?

It would be nice to know this sort of thing, and as soon as possible. So get to it, people! It behooves you to send us some input (cuz you get a free copy out of it).

Enough chattering. Hit the stories, and the other stuff. I think you'll enjoy them.

*Susan M. Garrett*

## REPEAT PERFORMANCE

by K. Linden

She pressed herself into the gully, afraid that the slightest movement would betray her location. At one point, she thought she saw "Him" standing above her, his red eyes piercing the underbrush in search of her. Karenina waited for him to move, to call out her name, to kill her where she lay, but he moved on quickly, distracted by something else.

A sigh of relief escaped her when she saw him pass, but she tensed immediately. A rosy glow was spreading from the east.

The sun was rising.

Karenina fought the instinctual urge to panic and began to review methods of escape. Suddenly, she laughed. There was no reason for her to fear the rays of daylight any longer. She was no longer a member of the undead. Her spirit lifted, she easily evaded the mortal search teams that he employed during the daylight hours. Even they could not stop her from her destination, John Steed's home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sunday afternoons were just the right time to catch up on unfinished business, which was precisely what Steed was doing. He stood suddenly, aware of movement on the patio. "I know you're out there," he said evenly. "There's no point in hiding any longer."

The curtains on the glass doors revealed only a shadowy outline. The handle turned, the door moved inward...but it couldn't be!

His mind automatically fled back to another time, when the same beautiful woman had stood in a similar doorway on a comparably glorious Sunday afternoon....

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He paced angrily, frustrated at his inability to act. There must be some word, any word....

"Steed?" She stood in the doorway, smiling.

"You're alive!" He threw his arms around her, then quickly regained his lost composure. "When we didn't get any word, we thought...I didn't expect to see you again."

"We almost didn't make it," she admitted, then laughed. "Matthew said he didn't dare come back without me, he didn't like the idea of facing you alone."

Steed smiled. "We both know how rare a commodity you are. How did the mission go?"

Karenina drew back, out of his arms. "As well as could be expected."

"Can I offer you a drink? The usual?"

She nodded. "Yes, thank you."

Steed poured, his back to her. "You don't know how glad I am to see you. And Matthew?"

"As always, not a scratch. John?"

He turned, handing her the drink. "Is something on your mind?"



"Matthew asked me...to marry him...." She looked into his eyes for some reaction, some way to gauge her reply, but his defenses were up. She could see nothing.

"And...?" The question was toneless, emotionless.

Karenina turned away again. "I haven't answered yet.... I'm going to say yes."

"Cheers, then. The best for both of you."

Karenina felt the difference immediately, something between them had changed in that moment. "I think Matthew wants you to be his best man, but...."

"But, you'd rather I didn't? If you wish...."

"You know that my parents are dead. I was hoping you'd give me away," she said quietly. Tears formed in her eyes, but she brushed them away. "I'm sorry, it sounds so cruel...!"

He put his arms around her, wondering if she would cry. She didn't, she never had. This was the closest to tears that he had ever seen her. "When will the wedding be?" he asked gently. "How are the plans progressing?"

"We have...one more mission. I believe it's in Romania, of all places." Her eyes were dry now, a half-smile on her lips. "I should go now. I have to see Matthew later. He'll wonder why I'm upset. Goodbye John. Thank you for understanding."

She kissed him quickly and left as quietly as she had come. Karenina had thanked him for understanding, but he didn't understand. He had lost again. Why was it always his duty to understand, his duty to lose gracefully?

That was the last time he had seen her. She and Matthew had disappeared in Romania.

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"Steed?" Her voice trembled slightly. He had seen her again, a few months ago. She had been a member of the undead, beyond his reach. But now? Her face was flushed, bruised. Her clothes were torn and mudstained, the exposed skin covered with scratches. And...she was standing in sunlight!

"Steed?" she asked again, plaintively. She stumbled forward, falling into his arms, and allowed him to help her to a couch.

"Karenina, how...?" He poured a glass of water, uncertain of her physical condition. She sputtered and choked, but seemed to calm down some as she drank.

"He's after me," she said anxiously, gesturing with the half-filled glass. "I had to sneak in. He has spies out front, I'm certain of it. I've been on the run for a week, or is it two? I can't hold out any longer...."

"Karenina, Karen, calm down. The basics," prompted Steed. "Go back to the basics. Remember your training. Now...report."

Karenina finished the glass of water and breathed deeply. "He's following me."

Steed nodded. "Who's following you?"

Karenina hissed the word angrily. "Dracula!"

Steed sighed. "I suppose we should try a different track. Why was he following you?"

She smiled, then laughed. "John, are you blind! Just look at me. I'm mortal again!"

Her hand was warm and he could feel her pulse. She was breathing, her cheeks were flushed...he had been blind, blinded by her presence.

He kissed her hand. "Welcome back among the living. How did it happen? After you...left, I did some research. I was under the impression that you had embarked on a one way journey, that there was no way back."

"There isn't, not normally. After I left, as you put it, I began to realize how much a prisoner I really was. I had been deluding myself, believing that I had found a better way. But it was only a living death. What is it about you that always reminds me how wonderful life is?"

"I enjoy life, Karenina. I live."

"I can't fault that argument," she said lightly. "Anyway, I began to listen to gossip. I heard of a vampire that had become human again, but I couldn't get any details. No one seemed to know anything."

"But you found him?"

"I did have my training to fall back on," she said humbly. "One of the gentleman's relatives was a bacteriologist. The vampire, Denning, gave the relative a sample of his blood and, as far as I've been able to discover, the bacteriologist developed an antibody."

"Vampirism is a virus?" asked Steed incredulously.

"I'm not sure. From what I gathered, a virus has something to do with it. It is completely transforming the body and making it into something other than human. I persuaded Denning to let me in on his secret."

"By threatening to let Dracula in on it as well, no doubt."

"That did have something to do with it. But Dracula found out anyway. I guess I had gotten sloppy and Dracula is naturally suspicious. I had taken the antibody and had become human again by the time Dracula attacked. I had no intention of letting Dracula get his hands on that formula, so I set the place on fire. Denning and his relative killed each other trying to escape Dracula."

"Then, why would Dracula be after you?" asked Steed.

"He thinks I've betrayed him. He's set on revenge and wants to make an example of me to the others. And, I've got this." She pulled a chain from beneath her jacket, upon which hung a vial of clear liquid. Carefully unclasping it, she handed it over to Steed.

"The antibody serum?" asked Steed.

"Denning had some around, just in case. I thought you'd be interested in having it."

"Interested, of course! I'll get the lab boys on it right away." Steed crossed to the phone, picked it up, then put it down again. "It's Sunday. Most of the lab will be off. It will have to wait for tomorrow. As for you," he turned to Karenina, "you look like you could use a good, hot bath."

"If you wouldn't mind," she said hesitantly. "Then I'll be on my way."

"On your way? I wouldn't think of it. You'll stay here."  
"John, Dracula may be a tyrant, but he's no fool. When he realizes that I'm here...."  
"But he doesn't know that. You mentioned spies before?"  
"Yes, mortals. People he tempts with the promise of immortality. Promise! A curse is more like it!"  
"And you're certain that you weren't followed?"  
"I don't think I was followed, but I can't be sure. I know he has men watching key places, and this is one of them. I couldn't put you in that kind of danger. Sometimes I think you're the only one who can keep me sane. You're my only link...."  
"To the past, the old days," finished Steed quietly. "Yes, I suppose that I am."  
Karenina hugged him. "Steed, I didn't mean...."  
He pulled back slightly and said, "In memory of the old days, stay, just a little while. I'll think of someplace to hide you, some way to keep you from him."  
Karenina laughed softly. "All right. You win. You always win. I can find the guest room, just put that," she indicated the vial, "in a safe place."  
"You can count on it." He watched her leave the room, then began to look around for someplace to put the vial.  
"John?" She paused in the doorway.  
"Yes?"  
"I forgot to ask, How is Purdey...and Gambit?"  
"They're fine, Karenina. In fact, I'll ask them over tomorrow morning to see you."  
"As a surprise?" asked Karenina. "Please don't tell them that I'm here, or that I'm mortal again."  
Steed smiled and spread out his hands in a gesture of surrender. "How could I refuse such a charming lady?"  
Karenina smiled. "You never have."

\*\*\*\*\*

Steed hung up the phone. Margo hadn't been pleased that their dinner date was canceled, but he'd make it up to her. Later. There were more important things to consider at the moment.

He paused at the phone, debating whether or not to call Purdey again. He had left a message on her answering machine an hour ago. Perhaps he should try Gambit? No. He couldn't call them over without telling them that Karenina was there. He wasn't about to break his word to Karenina.

The clock chimed one. She'd been asleep for six hours, but she'd need far more than that. And when she awoke.... He had no food there. He couldn't risk taking her out, or going out alone. Perhaps he could amend his message to Purdey to include some groceries.

A crash sounded from upstairs. Steed raced up, mentally noting his preventive measures; the holy medal around Karenina's neck, and what garlic he had was placed around the windows and doors. No undead creature could enter, without first being invited in.

A cold breeze blew toward him, the door to Karenina's room was open. He saw her lunge for the tall man standing by

the window, the knife she held slashing across his cheek. He merely laughed, holding her hand aloft, crushing the wrist until the knife fell.

Steed threw himself at the creature, roaring something lost quickly to the unnatural wind. He careened from the wall, repelled by a glancing blow.

Dracula's face was solemn. He held Karenina tightly against him, making her seem colorless against his dark cloak. She struggled against his hold. Dracula whispered something into her ear and she paused in her struggle, noticing Steed's presence for the first time. She shouted something, but the words were swept away by the wind.

Dracula stared at Steed and, although he stood across the room, seemed close enough to touch. "I claim only what is mine," he said above the wind. "My quarrel is not with you. For your own sake, do not follow."

The words reverberated through Steed's skull. Suddenly, his sense alerted him to a presence behind him, but it was too late. Pain filled his thoughts, then blackness, as the blow from behind took its toll.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Steed? Are you here?"

Steed tried to stand up and was immediately sorry that he had made the attempt, for the room began to swim before his eyes. Leaning back against the doorsill, he surveyed the damage.

Sunlight streamed through the broken window and shards of glass covered the floor. Dracula had wasted no time in entering, but how had he gotten in? The back of Steed's head began to throb and he realized that his assailant, undoubtedly mortal, had gained entry through less than supernatural means. Perhaps that was what Karenina had tried to tell him.

Steed rose again, but was successful in his second attempt.

"Steed?" Purdey was at the door. "What happened here? I came as soon as I got your message.... Then I come in and find the front door wide open and blood on the hall carpet. I've known you to throw some interesting parties before, but...."

Steed surveyed the glass by the window and noted that some pieces were tinged with blood. Karenina had been there last night, barefoot....

"It was a party of sorts, yes. A reunion you might say." Steed bent down and picked up the holy medal on the broken chain. "Karenina came here yesterday afternoon."

"Yesterday evening?" asked Purdey pointedly.

"No, yesterday afternoon," corrected Steed. "She's as human as you or I, now."

"Mortal? But how?"

"Perhaps we should discuss that over a cup of tea." Steed winced as he felt the bump on the back of his head, "and a bit of first aid?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Gambit yawned. If this were like any other Monday morning, he would still have two more hours of sleep ahead of him.

It wasn't a normal Monday morning. Steed had called him fifteen minutes ago and told him to get dressed and sit tight. Something big was up, but Steed wouldn't give him a clue. Typical.

Gambit opened the door in answer to the doorbell. "Now will you tell me what's going on?" he asked. "Or is it still hush-hush?"

Steed smiled. "It's not hush-hush, simply unauthorized. May we come in?"

Gambit stood aside as Steed and Purdey walked in. She stopped and straightened Gambit's tie. With a cheerful smile, she added, "What's wrong, not enough beauty sleep?"

Gambit answered with a wan smile, perched himself on a chair, and waited.

"All right," began Steed. "To the point, then. Karenina was kidnapped from my place last night."

"Karenina? Karen?" asked Gambit. "She's here?"

"Was here," corrected Purdey. "And not for long. Someone broke into Steed's last night and walked off with her."

"Leaving me with a painful memory," added Steed.

"What was the motive?" asked Gambit. "Ransom?"

Steed held up the vial. "This was part of the motive. Karenina, Karen...told you that she had a disease that prevented her from going out during daylight hours. This is the cure for that disease."

"The inventor met with an unfortunate accident," explained Purdey. "But not before Karen had taken the serum herself and rescued this bit." She noted Steed's approving nod. They doubted that Gambit would believe in vampires, even after his last encounter with Karenina. They were telling the truth, in a way.

Gambit examined the vial. "They must have wanted this stuff badly. Have you gotten it checked out yet?"

"No, and I don't think we will. We might be forced to use this to bargain with Dracula for Karen's life."

"Dracula?" laughed Gambit. "You're joking." He stopped laughing when he saw their expressions. "You're not joking, are you?"

"I wish I were," answered Steed. "That's the name he goes by. Purdey has an address in Romania that may be something. He may have taken her there."

Gambit glanced at Purdey. "You never told me you knew where she had gone."

"You never asked me...directly," answered Purdey guiltily.

"There is a problem," admitted Steed. "None of this has anything to do with the Ministry. And it could be very fatal. If you would rather not come...."

Gambit seemed offended. "It may not be Ministry business, but it is our business. Karen's life is a stake in this game. I'm playing."

Steed smiled and pulled something from his pocket. "Splendid. I've signed us all out on leave. Here are two tickets, the plane leaves in an hour. Get packed and I'll meet you there."

Purdey turned to him. "I thought you were packed."

"I am. I have to see a man about an umbrella...." Steed closed the door behind him.



"Well?" asked Gambit.

"Well what?" countered Purdey.

"You know more about it than I do."

"About what?"

Gambit pulled a case from his closet and threw open the wardrobe doors. "What does a well-dressed man wear in Romania these days?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Steed checked his watch, simultaneously wishing that the train would go faster. His first plan had been to beat Dracula to the ancient fortress. Now, he would be lucky to pace him, or arrive shortly after him. Airfields did not exist, in the primitive mountain terrain. The trains were slow and prone to accidents, much of the travel normally completed by horse and carriage. He railed against these means only because they slowed his progress. Each lost minute made Karenina's death a certainty.

The Romanian terrain was untamed wilderness; disconcerting, perhaps, but beautiful. Most of the beauty lay in its inability to accept human mastery. It reminded him of Karenina.

And, perhaps even more, of Matthew.

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Matthew doubled over in pain, waving Steed away. "There's nothing you can do," he gasped.

"You're disabled now. That wasn't the smartest thing you've ever done." Steed frowned, checking the door and the barred window again.

"It bought us time," said Matthew angrily. "They would have shot us there, Steed. Standard procedure. We needed the time."

"Don't think that I'm not grateful for the advantage, but there are other ways than baiting, challenges, and insults. If...we don't manage to escape, our deaths will be less...pleasant."

"As if death could be pleasant." Matthew leaned back into a corner. "She'll come, Steed. I know she will."

Steed turned to face Matthew. "Her orders were to get the information, then go...."

"Orders!" scoffed Matthew.

"Orders," repeated Steed solemnly. "She's good. That's what a good agent would do."

"If she and I were here, you would come," said Matthew softly. "Damn them all, you would come."

"Perhaps," answered Steed. "Yes, maybe I would."

Matthew chuckled in triumph. "Do you regret this?" he asked.

"Regret what?"

"This, this mission. Remember, you said that this one would make or break us as a team."

"I did say that. No, I don't regret this. We were doing well until...."

"...We ran into that unscheduled patrol," finished Matthew ruefully. "At least Karenina got away. That I do regret."

"Hmn?" asked Steed.

"I wish...there had been a chance to say goodbye." Matthew turned his gaze to the ceiling. "I've said goodbye to so many pretty ladies. So many goodbyes.... And the one time it means something...."

"Where is the optimist now?" asked Steed with a chuckle.

Matthew smiled. "I wish I knew...." Suddenly, he straightened up, forgetting about the broken ribs. "John, I've decided something. I'm going to pull back and wait. No more pushing. Karenina's got to decide on her own. There's the optimist, I've already decided that we'll escape."

Steed smiled. One could never be sure what was going on inside Matthew. "I promise you, I'll be at the wedding."

"It's her choice," reminded Matthew. "Whatever she decides, whenever she decides, I'll abide by it. And I can promise you the same."

Steed looked back at Matthew in surprise. "Pardon?"

Matthew shifted and caught his breath. "You'll never admit it, Steed, but you love her too...."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Are you all right?"

Steed smiled back at Purdey. "Sorry, I was daydreaming."

Gambit pulled the cases down from the overhead racks. "Our stop should be up any minute now."

The conductor rapped at the door, calling, "Vishnu station!"

"Let's go," said Steed.

Another woman joined them on the platform. As the train moved off, she walked over to the horse drawn carriage and the driver loaded her luggage aboard. The harness of the horses glinted in the moonlight.

Gambit talked to the station manager, then returned. "They've just received word of a train wreck," he explained. "It will be at least four hours before they can clear the tracks to get another train through to the village."

"Dashentec," said Purdey automatically. Gambit looked at her questioningly. "Dashentec, it's the name of the village," she explained.

"Two hours lost at the border, four or more here...." Steed looked at his watch, it was almost three in the morning. "We're too late!" he said angrily. "Dealyed, we've been deliberately delayed!"

"At least we know they're here," said Purdey sympathetically.

"Steed...."

Steed looked up at Gambit's call and noticed the woman that had gotten off the train with them was approaching them.

"Excuse my forward nature," she said quietly. "But do you require transportation to Dashentec? My carriage is going in that direction."

"Thank you, Miss....?"

"Murray."

"Thank you, Miss Murray," said Steed graciously. "These are desperate circumstances. We are most grateful for your offer."

"Anything to help a fellow traveller, sir. The forests are most dangerous at night."

"Your driver is unloading your luggage," noted Gambit.

Miss Murray smiled. "Yes, my carriage is small and I was going to stop at a friend's house on the way to Dashentec. Please, it is only a few minutes walk and it will be out of your way. My coachman will return for me in the morning."

"Are you certain that we can't drop you off?" asked Steed, as he helped Gambit load their bags. "As you said, the forests are dangerous."

"Dangerous to strangers, perhaps. But not to those who know the ways of the night," answered Miss Murray. "No, thank you. I shall be quite safe. A good journey to you." She stepped off the platform and into the forest.

"How quaint!" exclaimed Purdey, as she settled herself in the carriage.

"You may regret it later," said Gambit cheerfully. "I've heard these things lack shock absorbers."

"I still think it's quaint," protested Purdey. "Don't you think so, Steed?"

"Hm? Oh, yes. Quaint may not be the word for it, Purdey. It is charming, but considering the condition of these 'roads,' you may have preferred the Rover." Steed paused, then added something in a mumble.

"Steed?" asked Gambit.

"Nothing. It's...do either of you connect anything with Miss Murray?"

"No," answered Purdey. "Should we?"

"No, I suppose not," said Steed. "It would be too much of a coincidence. Still...."

\*\*\*\*\*

Steed handed the room key to Purdey.

"Still your idea of quaint?" asked Gambit.

"I wouldn't want to live here," said Purdey. "But it is charming."

Gambit dropped the cases on the floor and fell into a chair. "Now what?"

"We rest," said Steed. "The sun sets soon after five. I would suggest we head up to the old fortress by then."

"Why not attack now?" asked Purdey. "During the day, Dracula will be helpless."

"You've forgotten about the others," cautioned Steed. "Not all of his followers are undead. In addition, Dracula may be stronger during the night, but he will also be overconfident."

Gambit yawned. "I'll be glad to get some sleep."

"Not yet," warned Steed, as he rose and motioned Gambit toward the door. "We have some rumors to spread."

"Rumors?" asked Gambit.

"About a lovely lady doing research about the noble families of the country."

Purdey blinked in surprise. "Then, I won't be coming with you?"

Steed paused. "Purdey, I wish you were. You'd be safer."

\*\*\*\*\*



Purdey touched up her makeup, then rose and placed the cross in her pocket. Closing the window, she noticed how quickly the sun had set and how dark the outside world had become. Steed and Gambit had left two hours ago.

She smiled as she remembered Steed's anxious warnings, like an old mother hen. He would never have put her in this kind of danger if it wasn't necessary, etc.

Shespread opened books around the room and tossed papers here and there, giving the room an academic air. He would be here soon. Dracula. A shiver moved up her spine at the thought.

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The steep, sloping approach seemed well guarded. Climbing the rocky cliff was the only alternative. Surrounded by darkness, they made their way up the cliff, inch by inch.

A rock slipped, then a few more. Steed felt the rock crumble under his fingers.

Gambit called out, "Steed!", grabbing his arm just as the entire section of rock crumbled. For a moment, Steed dangled above the dark waters of the lake below, then he was again precariously balanced against the cliff.

"Thank you," he said breathlessly.

"Don't mention it," said Gambit calmly. "Would you like to rest a moment?"

"No, we don't have time." He looked around frantically.

"My umbrella?"

"It fell," said Gambit. "There."

Steed peered over the edge, then began to climb down after it.

Gambit grabbed his arm, holding him there. "You said we didn't have the time."

"The umbrella is important."

"It's an umbrella."

"I'm going to get it," said Steed evenly.

Gambit shrugged in resignation. "I'll go. I'm faster...."

Steed watched Gambit scramble down the hard won cliff side and reach the umbrella. What did time really matter now? Karenina was probably dead, or worse.

Ten minutes later, Gambit handed him the umbrella. It seemed undamaged. "Thank you. It is important."

Gambit peered upward. "They haven't seen us yet?"

Steed shook his head. "This side isn't watched."

Gambit looked down the cliff. "I can see why. You'd have to be crazy to try it."

Steed smiled. "Or desperate."

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They scaled the rubble of the main wall and crossed the courtyard with no trouble. A door was easily broken down.

"Which way?" asked Gambit.

Steed indicated the stairs. "You go up, I'll go down."

Gambit nodded and began to climb.

"Gambit?"

Gambit reluctantly pulled the cross from his pocket, showing Steed that he still had it. Steed waved and turned, taking the lower staircase.

"Superstition," muttered Gambit. He hung his chain over a suit of armor he passed on the stairs.

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Steed found the vault quickly and, surprisingly, unguarded. He took one of the two vials from his pocket, the one containing the holy water, and sprinkled it into the three earth lined coffins. The dirt blackened and steam rose from it. Satisfied, Steed placed the vial next to Katerina's. He hoped he wouldn't have to use either.

He searched the nearby rooms, but found nothing.

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Purdey looked over the tall man that filled her doorway. "Are you the woman who requested information on the local nobility?" he asked, after bowing elegantly.

Purdey smiled. "Yes, I am. Please, come in and sit down." Her mirror was turned face down, within reach, the glass of holy water stood on the bedstand, and the cross was in her pocket; all prepared as to Steed's instructions.

"I haven't gotten as much information as I had hoped," said Purdey. "The locals are reticent, at best."

Dracula smiled. "They are loyal to their land and their... superstitions. They do not take quickly to strangers and new ways."

Purdey met his gaze once, then looked away quickly. His eyes seemed to draw her away from herself. She couldn't afford not to be alert.

"Is something wrong?" asked Dracula pleasantly.

"No, not at all. And what was the name of your family?" She busied herself with pen and paper.

"My family did not live here, but they helped to secure the area. Tepes, also know as Dracul, the dragon." He smiled. "What better name for a family that fought against the Turks?"

"I...see."

Dracula smiled. "Come, girl, do you think me a fool? I know who you are, where you are from, when you arrived...."

"You have an excellent spy system," complimented Purdey. She searched her pocket for her cross.

"I told you that the people are loyal, if only out of fear. And you friends, my guards already have them. Do you know that?"

Purdey held the cross before her and backed away against the wall.

Dracula flinched, throwing the table across the room with one hand. "You are afraid."

"No!" cried Purdey defiantly. Her eyes met his and somehow locked.

"Throw it away!" he hissed. The blackness in his eyes seemed a vacuum, drawing her in. She faltered, then dropped

the cross. The table rattled at her side. Purdey's hand curled around the glass. When Dracula reached for her, she flung the holy water in his face.

Dracula bellowed in pain. Purdey ran for the window. The stable roof was only a short jump down. She ran across the roof, but was stopped in her tracks by the hand that gripped her shoulder. She spun around to fight and only met his gaze again.

Dracula laughed. "Do you see how useless it is? You are nothing to me, although you could be...." He ran his finger along the curve of her face. "Yes, you have potential."

His head dropped downward.

Vaguely, Purdey felt his breath on her neck, then two slight jabs, like a pin-prick.

To be continued....

#### EVENSONG

by Christy Donne

It is no crime to love the night,  
Black velvet against which  
Crystal tears of heaven shine.  
A stage for phantoms, dreams, and horrors  
That live in dark silence,  
Stalking misty, shadowed halls.

So beautiful, eternal night,  
Quiet lover of the moon,  
Fearless master of the phantoms...

And yet, day's harsh light does approach  
To pierce the cobwebbed peace,  
Dispelling phantoms.

                                    The dark  
Is dust before a gale.

                                    Fear not!  
The phantoms will return  
To their nocturnal wand'rings.

Ancient, ageless, blameless night,  
Return upon sun's death  
And give life to dead phantoms.

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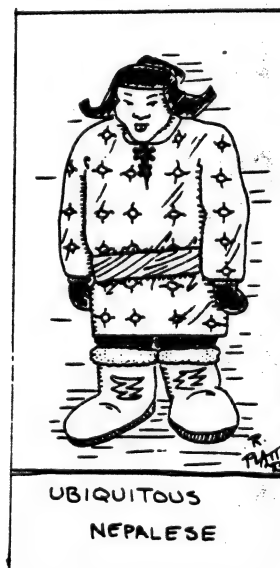


## With Contributions By:

Poul Anderson, Brad W. Foster, William Rotsler,  
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## THE LETTER

by Edd Vick

My dear Amadeus,

I hope and--dare I say it?--pray that this reaches you. You spoke of your gift as a godsend, but it has become an infernal curse to me. I shall start at the beginning.

I was the student and you the revered teacher. I was only the third woman to be accepted at the University of Munich and, while my fellow students were gentlemanly at all times, I felt the undercurrents of disbelief and resentment that a woman should aspire to the lofty realms of philosophy.

In you, though, I detected a kindred spirit. Many an evening we would sit in the library discussing the ramifications of the ideas we had learned in class the morning before. You were always dispassionate, but I must confess that I felt the first stirrings of a feeling for you. That--I blush to admit--is what made me agree to what happened next.

When you first spoke of having so little time to learn all of philosophy I treated it as any other concept, but I soon learned what it meant to you. You explained what you were and why the classes and our meetings were at such odd hours. I scoffed at first, but you soon convinced me. I studied your kind and the concepts I had learned in your class convinced me there was nothing inherently evil in a creature like you, and so I let you make me as you were.

Your fangs entered my neck on the first night and I felt violated, as if I had been used against my will. But only for a few moments, then your will, which seemed so much more powerful now, easily overrode my own and I felt as you did, that nothing was too much to give up for the gift I was to receive.

The second night arrived, and your bite was all fire and ice, like I imagine the pleasure of sexual conjunction that has been denied me ever since.

The third night brought oblivion. Whatever I dreamed that night I have long since forgotten.

I awoke ages later--though it was only three days--in the subbasement of the Philosophy school and ventured out to find that you had left, chased by those who considered your teachings heretical. The hastily-written letter from you I found in my room warned me to be circumspect in appeasing my Hunger.

I saw that accenting and knew of what you spoke. Even then, I Hungered -- you know what for. The rare meat I ordered was only so much dust. But the blood. Ah, the blood!

I vowed never to take a human life; my battle to keep that vow would well-nigh consume me. You know my will. It was you who told me what a triumph it was to be accepted at the University. It is important to me that you believe I never did take a human life.

I tried to enter the Medical Department, but the resistance to a female philosopher was as nothing before that to a female doctor who didn't care to limit her study to women. I did convince them to let me take some of the classes when I told them a knowledge of the physical body and brain might lead to new thoughts on the way men think. They seemed quite taken

with the idea, though this was far from the first time it had been broached. I was surprised that I had convinced them. My will seemed so much stronger than theirs.

Them. The humans. It was so easy to think of them as a race apart, something less than us. I resist that thought.

I became a philosopher and a nurse. The medical students thought it surprising that the sight of blood did not distress me. To escape their enquiring minds, I moved to Lyons upon graduation.

I settled in and lived off a small inheritance while I wrote. You may have read some of my books on the link between body and mind. I made a few modest investments. About fifty years later, I engineered my first death by falling off a cliff.

I moved to Alexandria and practiced my nursing for a time. It was there I first encountered magick.

An old woman came to live in the apartment house where I lived, about three years after I moved in. The very first day she moved in, we happened to meet on the stair. We looked into each other's eyes and knew one of those moments of total recognition. She knew me for what I was, and I--I knew her to be a witch. We passed without speaking.

She came to my room that night and we talked. She said that she had detected a basic goodness in me and I laughed at her belief in good and evil. We parted amicably.

She came the next night and the next. Finally, she made her request. She was growing old, she said, and would die soon. She wanted me to make her one of us.

Of course I refused. She promised much if I would and threatened more should I not. Our discussion grew heated and I fled lest I strike her and kill her with my strength.

I alighted far outside the city near a pyramid. It was only a short time before dawn, so I knew I must find refuge inside.

No one lived in the structure, so I knew that I could freely enter were I to find a means. I searched for frantic minutes and at last found a tiny crack through which I could slip.

I always carried a bit of dust from Munich sewed into the linings of my clothes so I could sleep anywhere, albeit with some discomfort. But this day, sleep was long in coming.

The atmosphere was stifling. At last, I slept, and sleeping, dreamed.

She approached me and said, "I made an offer and you refused. Now I am dead. It is on your hands and you shall never be quit of me, for I was a powerful witch and my shade may follow you to the very doors of Dis."

She was wrong. Hear that, witch? If I had acceded--if I had drunk deeply of your life's-blood, I would have killed you. You would be dead even as I am dead.

There lied the basic dichotomy. I am more than human and, at the same time, less than human. I have so much strength, so many abilities. And yet, I appear in no mirrors, no still water reflects my image. Perhaps I am a ghost, one who haunts all of humanity--yes, and all animals too--as I



am haunted in turn by the ghost of she who I refused to kill and, in so doing, murdered.

I lived on in Alexandria for a while, my nights full of nursing and my days full of her in my dreams.

Finally, I could take it no longer and caused myself to die again by falling off the ship that travelled to England.

I arrived in London full of hope for a new life. I was accepted at London Hospital and soon proved my worth, by my days were still haunted by her.

I had heard of leeching at Munich and even seen it in practice a few times in Alexandria, but here the followers of Alexander of Tralles were numerous and bleeding from the jugular vein a common occurrence. I was tempted constantly.

In the end, my condition seemed to be the answer to my predicament. I secured the position of bloodletter--and easily gained it was, too. Every night I would drink my fill in dribs and drabs from a multitude of throats secure in the knowledge that I was aiding the patients. None of them remembered my method of letting.

Matters went on in this fashion for some time. I would have been happy had they gone on until the time came for my next death. It was not to be.

I was overlong at my task one evening with a restless patient when the head nurse came to look for me on some errand. She opened the door and one look at my blood smeared face told her the story. She screamed and fainted, drawing two doctors to the scene.

I could have killed them all, but my choice had been made long before. All I could do was die. I leaped to my death into the Thames.

I landed on the bank of the river, gasping at my narrow escape from the rushing water. I stole into the night to gather a few essentials from my room before embarking on a new life.

Posing as a landed gentlewoman, I travelled to Palermo and purchased a small castle with the proceeds of an investment made many years before. Having little else to do, I resolved to bring myself up to date with the latest developments in my two avocations, medicine and philosophy.

The surgeons and barbers were at war with the doctors again. That was nothing new, but the reason was. The surgeons, and especially the barbers, believed that bleeding, far from helping the patient, often hurt him instead. I would have paid little attention, save for the fact that many doctors were of the same persuasion.

As for philosophy, there was little new. After the first rush of excitement at discovering the science, one learns that there have been few advances in recent centuries, and all of them subject to acrimonious dispute.

And what of you? I heard that you--or someone very like you--caused several deaths not far from here. The rats gave me your description and shall carry this missive to you.

For, you see, when you receive this, I shall be dead. My dedication to medicine has caused me possibly to hurt many who placed their trust in me as a nurse. My belief in

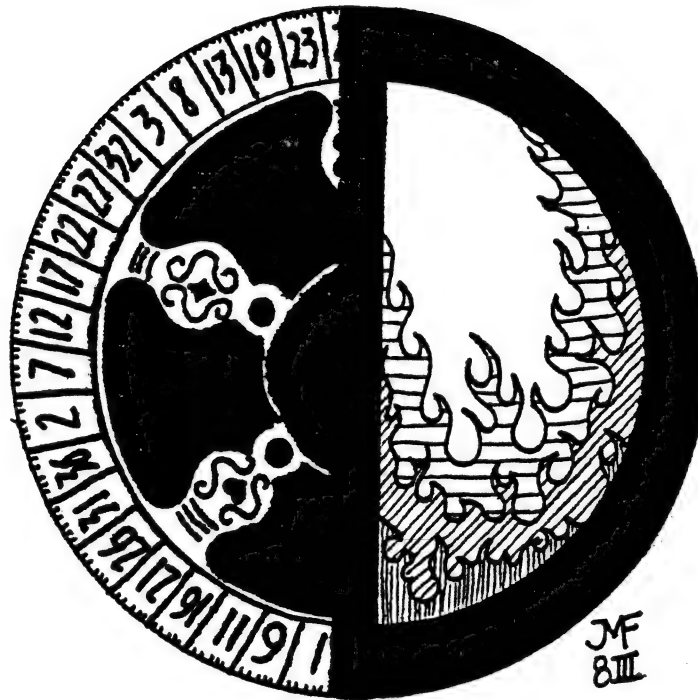
philosophy has seen me slowly lose faith in a staggering science. The high morals I seemed to see in you I now see as false. If, as you taught me, there is no ultimate Good or Evil, then why am I haunted? The creature I am is flawed with a Thirst so great it hurts. I have thought long and hard on this. I must redeem myself. I must die.

Mayhap it will not be the death you think it is. On the one hand lies the stake, or a plunge into a stream. On the other?

I have heard rumors of a new land, one so large a person may disappear forever. A land where a person may live in harmony with the beasts and himself.

Fare thee well, Amadeus. When you receive this the decision will have been made. May you someday find peace.

Julia.





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**Submissions Deadline First Issue: 30 July 83**

## FOREWORD:

Michael Moorcock did it-  
Whereupon he tied together all of his heroic characters-  
from Elric to Jerry Cornelius- with a plot device known as  
the Eternal Warrior-

Philip Jose Farmer is notorious for it-  
Linking Sherlock Holmes to Lord Greystoke, etc. - and blaming  
it on a radioactive meteor-

Even a fellow named Mark Gruenwald has done it-  
By trying to chart and categorize the myriad universes that  
make up the Marvel and DC comic books (no mean feat, either)-

But in each instance, the ties that bonded these continuities  
together were fabricated.

## NETWORK II: AN EXPLANATION

by Guy Brownlee

In 1975, a movie called "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"  
was set loose in theaters across England and America. Two  
of the movie's principal characters, Brad and Janet, had  
supposedly hailed from an American rural community named  
Denton. According to the film's creator, Richard O'Brien,  
Denton was in the state of Ohio. However, in reality, (or  
whatever you call it) there is no such place.

Question: Just how many of us are aware that Denton is  
not the only non-existent metropolis in the equally non-  
existent state of Ohio?

It is the probability theory as applied to Hollywood  
(a probability theory itself). The theory is that if you  
put an unsurmountable number of chimpanzees in a large room  
filled with typewriters, in an unspecified amount of time  
they will have collectively written the entire works of  
William Shakespeare. It seems that, quite by accident, such  
movies as "Animal House," and "Network" have something in  
common. And Denton, we find, is not such an unusual place  
after all.

Answer: Homes of Happiness.

### 1. Subject: ANIMAL HOUSE

Circa: 1963

"Animal House" featured, among Bluto (John Belushi)  
and his fellow Deltans, the fictitious college and town of  
Faber, Ohio.

### 2. Subject: ROCKY HORROR/SHOCK TREATMENT

Circa: 1975-81

While it was just minimally referred to in "Rocky Horror"  
(a billboard in a graveyard), the fictitious town of Denton,  
Ohio, was prominently featured in the movie "Shock Treatment"  
and was presented as a gigantic 'Big Brother is Watching  
You' type T.V. studio.

3. Subject: MARY HARTMAN/FERNWOOD U.S.A.  
Circa: 1976-78

Fernwood, with its residents, the Hartmans, made Denton look almost normal. Fernwood, as it was often mentioned, was a fictitious town in Ohio and was described as being in the "tri-city" area.

4. Subject: S.C.T.V.  
Circa: 1976-82

Although filmed in Canada, "S.C.T.V." is described as being a television station in the fictitious town of Melonville, Ohio, and is also described as being in the "tri-city" area.

5. Subject: W.K.R.P. IN CINCINNATI  
Circa: 1979-82

This is a kind of turnaround, wherein we have what is described as a fictitious radio station in the real town of Cincinnati, Ohio.

#### RELATING NOTES-

- 1b. Subject: FERNWOOD 2-NITE  
Circa: 1978-79

When "Fernwood 2-Nite," a kind of spin-off of "Mary Hartman" (featuring Martin Mull as talk show host Barth Gimble) was renewed for a second season, it included real celebrity guests and had a slight name change to "America 2-Nite." It was then described as being a talk show on a fictitious television network by the name of U.B.S. ("Where we put the U before the BS!"), the very same network featured in the movie titled (you guessed it!) "Network."

- 2b. Subject: BOSOM BUDDIES  
Circa: 1981-82

In the second season of the show, it was revealed that Kip and Henry both hailed from Cleveland, Ohio, and that they both attended the fictitious school of Edgar Allen Poe High.

**B:** LETSGET. *MetaPhysical*

It is interesting to note that, besides the afore mentioned, these shows have certain themes in common.  
ONE: These programs all fit into what I call "Absurdist Pastiche." Or, to break it down, the combination of parody, satire, bizzaro, and slapstick styles of humor.  
TWO: About 95% of these programs use the banalism of television, and its dangers, as their target. Subjects 2,3,4, and 1b

either explore the politics behind the workings of television,  
or parody the kinds of programming the networks turn out.

And so on. The fact that these happen to be some of my  
favorite films and T.V. programs does not have any bearing  
on the validity of this article.

None whatsoever.

Really.

\*\*\*\*\*

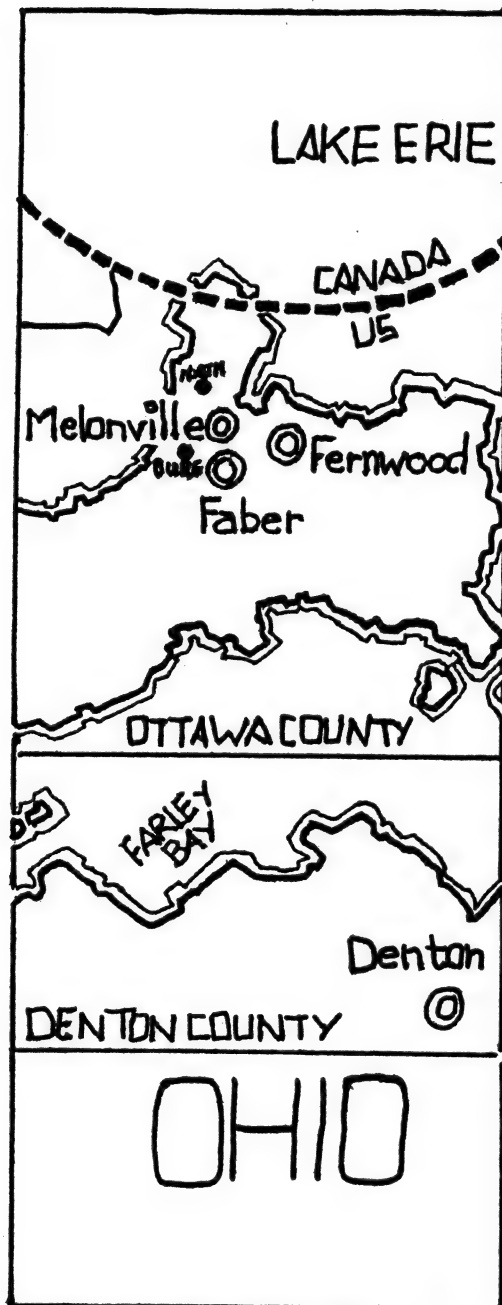


CHART BY ©LARUE INT.

"Once upon a Time, Far, Far away-  
In a galaxy know as OHIO...."

-Henry Desmond

NETWORK II:  
CAST OF CHARACTERS

From SHOCK TREATMENT:

Oscar Drill and the Bits  
Farley Flavors  
Macey Struthers  
Cosmo McKenly  
Nation McKenly  
Betty Hapschatt  
Oliver Wright  
Bert Shnick  
Ralph Hapschatt  
Brad Majors  
Janet Majors

From FERNWOOD U.S.A.:

Loretta June Hagers

From NETWORK:

Diana Christianson

From ANIMAL HOUSE:

Senator John 'Bluto' Blutarski  
D-Day  
Dean Veron Wormer  
The Deathmobile

From S.C.T.V.:

Bob McKensie  
Doug McKensie  
Guy Cabellaro  
Edith Prickley  
Floyd Robitson  
Gerry Todd

From ROCK AND ROLL HIGH SCHOOL:

Ms. Togar  
Riff Randall  
Tom Roberts  
Eaglebower  
Kay Rambo

From BOSOM BUDDIES:

Kip Wilson  
Henry Desmond

From AMERICA 2-NITE:

Barth Gimble  
Jerry Hubbard  
Happy  
General D.W. Ungerwitter

From W.K.R.P. IN CINCINNATI:

Dr. Johnny Fever  
Bailey Quarters  
Les Nesman  
Andy Travis  
Jennifer Marlowe  
Venus Flytrap  
Gordon 'Big Guy' Carlson  
Herb Tarlock

## NETWORK II

by Guy Brownlee

### Chapter One

"I'm Mad As Hell...."

And with a cue tone the title "NOONTIME BACKTALK" lit across the T.V. screens of Denton, in brilliant red, white, and blue. The theme music swelled as its hostess walked onstage, shortly followed by thunderous applause. A tall, shapely "honeyblonde," she was the type of small town personality that made young boys' hearts flutter and old ladies wish their daughters were like. Her name was Macey Struthers and the station was D.T.V.

\*\*\*\*\*

The bread and butter of the home of happiness had seemigly bit the big one. Its visibility factor was down 35% and its ratings were shot to hell. What went wrong? How in sanity's name did the bottom fall out? This just didn't happen. Not to Farley Flavors. Something had to be done. Soon.

\*\*\*\*\*

The camera man obviously had trouble concentrating on Macey Struthers' face, as he zoomed in on her low cut, "split up the hip," red spangled evening dress. Someone should have told her that it was still mid-afternoon. "Happy Noontime, everybody!"

"HAPPY NOONTIME MACEY!"

"It is not often in the life and career of a professional journalist such as myself, that one has the honor and privilege of introducing two stars of such magnitude as I am about to do now. Their names are synonymous with beer and back-bacon, tougues and twofers. Let's hear a big Denton welcome for those lovable hoseheads, Bob and Doug McKenzie!"

\*\*\*\*\*

"Lovable hoseheads," HA! Inept buffoons would be more accurate. Not that it stopped him from trying to bribe them over to D.T.V. "I'll give a full half hour," he said. "You'll get your own separate dressing rooms," he promised. "I'll even toss in a LIFETIME supply of backbacon." He went on and on, but all he got in response were blank looks and negative answers. They were loyal to their station and to their station manager. He couldn't figure it out. How could someone like Bob and Doug latch on with the public, and how could someone like Guy Caballero latch on to Bob and Doug? Ratings weeks were coming and he would need some leverage. BAD.

\*\*\*\*\*

"So, tell me, Bob, is your and Doug's position at S.C.T.V. a responsible one?"

"Oh, YA. I mean, if something goes wrong, we're pretty responsible, eh?"

"Uh HUH. O.K. then, is there any truth to the rumor that S.C.T.V. is run on a discriminatory race/class system?"

"Uh, geez, I dunno, everyone I know there has a drivers license...."

Macey began to shift nervously in her seat. It was going to be a long fifteen minutes.

\*\*\*\*\*

Farley was beginning to feel sick. So this was where fate had led D.T.V.'s chief sponser and station manager. His highest rated show and most popular personality, interviewing what amounted to two derelects off the street. And the fact that he was watching it happen on twenty screens simultaneously made it seem twenty times worse. But before any calls could be made, any demands could be issued, before anything could be done to get Dwidle Dee and Dwidle Dum offstage, the show was blipped offscreen and replaced by the Ohio State Senatorial seal. Farley collapsed in his chair and almost swallowed his cigar. There was such a thing as luck, after all....

\*\*\*\*\*

As the seal flashed onscreen, a high nasal voice (one that sounded more appropriate to fast food commercials than political announcements) proclaimed, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the senator of Ohio, His Honor, Bluto Blutarski!" The camera then cut from the seal to a slightly obese man wearing a grey three piece suit, with thick rimmed glasses, and a purple tie, seated in a bit chair by a fireplace, with an "American Gothic" hanging over the mantle. His look was either that of a man of stern concentration, or that of a man who had just tied one on. Considering the man, it was probably the latter....

"Good evening. In my travels as your representative in Washington, I have encountered again and again the evidence of that which is called fate. Its' twists and turns, its' suddenness and resolution. I believe in Fate; I believe that fate governs every breath, dictates the very air that same breath takes. Many have sought to defy fate, yet few win. And even fewer boast of their victory. I believe that at least once in every soul's lifetime, fate crashes in upon you and carries you away like a great wave. And as you careen amidst its tides and crests, all you can hope for is to hold onto something tight and pray (and try not to throw up). That is why I've decided to throw my hat into the ring and run for the Presidency of the United States of America. I will be making a tour of my beloved home state, asking for your votes and contributions, ending in a giant beer bla--, er, \*ahem\*, fund raiser at the home of my fondly remembered days of academia, Faber University, in dear old Faber, Ohio. I will be looking forward to seeing you all there. Thank you."

"This has been a paid political announcement. We now return you to your regularly scheduled program."

\*\*\*\*\*

A crooked grin slid across Farley's lips like a snake on gravel. With one, almost eerie, fluid motion, he swiveled back



in his chair and grabbed a phone receiver. "Hello, Bert? Get the kids together. Tell 'em Unca Ferlay's gonna have a little meeting. The light just dawned and the shades weren't drawn...."

\*\*\*\*\*

A recently demolished television set stood in a corner billowing smoke, as a scholarly looking gentleman behind a desk suddenly clutched at his heart and collapsed in a chair. After frantically searching through the desk drawers and finding nothing, he slammed down on an intercom button and cried out, "TOGAR! MY PILLS! BRING ME MY PILLS!" -- and quickly fell back into the chair. Faber University's Dean Wormer was a haunted man. Through all of his twenty years of loyal and devoted service, memories, tainted and macabre, plagued him. Not of the so-called sixties revolution, not of the times of recession and presidential cutbacks, not even of the ever present infection of Delta House. (Well, not quite.) No, this was a memory of one one-time DELTAN by the name of Bluto Blutarsky. As a student, he was a disgrace to the University with his reckless and wanton manner. As a senator, he was a disgrace to the state ( with his reckless and wanton manner). What in heaven's name would happen if he actually became President?? Food fights in the Hall of Congress? Beer blasts in the Pentagon? TOGA PARTIES IN THE WHITE HOUSE?! "Togar, forget the pills, call an ambulance; my pacemaker is picking up Cincinnati!!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Riff Randall\*\* leapt from her bed, whooping louder than a Banshee in heat. HE was coming home. In no longer time than it took to whip on a robe and switch off her Sony, Delta House's first lady president was running through the halls spreading the word like a T.V. evangelist asking for donations. "HE'S COMING! HE'S COMING!"

"I didn't know he was that excited...." Riff turned to face the pun's point of origin, a man with a handlebar mustache, sitting on a motorcycle and chugging back a beer. His name was D-Day. Like Bluto, he was a fraternity legend, and for the past twenty years, had made Delta House his home.

"D-Day, D-Day, he's coming, he's coming!"

"Quite, li'l girl, or people are going to run out into the hall expecting to see something, an' they're gonna be real disappointed! Who's coming?"

"BLUTO!!"

Outside, the sound of a Harley Davidson falling down a flight of stairs rang through the campus as a beer can flew through the second story window, accidentally beaming a science

---

\*\* FOOTNOTE: Togar and Riff Randall, in case you didn't know, are characters from the movie, "ROCK 'N ROLL HIGH SCHOOL." Delta House seemed to be the only logical place they would wind up.



major.

Nobody noticed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob and Doug were wandering through the halls of D.T.V., mad as beeswax, searching for the "hoser" who was supposed to pay them. They both had ten buck coming and, by Calgary!, they were going to get it! "Geez, I shoulda known the place was a rip when the concession stand charged ten cents extra for a cip o' coffee! That's fifty cents extra in metric!"

"Ya, and like, they didn't have any donuts, eh? Who ever heard of a morning show without donuts?"

After looking high and low, they finally came across a door that read, "Manager's Station, F. Flavors," and decided to go in. There before them was the center of operations, the place where Farley could keep his scheming, ever-watchful eyes on every possible activity -- on air or off.

Hidden behind a rose tinted sign proclaiming "the home of happiness" and with over twenty television screens blaring jingles for his fast food establishments, it was here that Farley Nathaniel Flavors made his nest. "Like, it looks like the right place, eh?"

"Ya, but nobody's here now. Maybe we should, like, come back later?"

"No!! I mean, we come this far, right? We wait!"

\*\*\*\*\*

"All right! What was with the purple tie?"

It was the match of the century. In one corner were the new Public relations driectors, Kip Wilson and Henry Desond, fresh from their New York office. In the other corner were the new senatorial aides, Brad and Janet Majors, fresh from their new home in Columbus, Ohio. Kip and Henry thought Senator Blutarski's image needed more "flash" (Ha!). Brad and Janet, obviously, did not.

"Look, Ms. Majors, it's the man's favorite color, O.K.? Besides, the bit needed more pizzaz."

"The Man is running for President, Mr. Wilson, not the 'Uncle Floyd Show!'"

Meanwhile, Senator Bluto ducked out through a backstage door to be with himself (and a bottle of "Yukon Jack") for a while. Gee, he kind of liked the tie.

\*\*\*\*\*

Doug tried to figure out how to change the channel on the moniter units -- that's how it started. He wound up shorting them all out -- that's how it ended (sort of). "Aw, Geez, now look what you did!"

"You think we'll still get our ten bucks?"

"Take off! It'll cost at least twenty to get them fixed. Maybe thirty!"

"Then, maybe like, we should sneak out before we get caught, eh?"

"Sounds good to me --."

Suddenly, sounds of conversation started drifting down the hall, and a look of sheer terror appeared on Bob and Doug's faces. "Geez, somebody's comin'! What'll we do?!"

Bob looked quickly about the office. "O.K! There's a closet! Let's hide!" In a second, flat, Bob and Doug became one with the floor mops and the dust rags.

"What's goin' on?"

"Shh! They're comin' into the room now!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Farley Flavors was the first to enter, wearing a new milk-white leisure suit and smoking a fresh cigar. Following close behind were Cosmo and Nation McKinley, looking extremely puzzled, with the ever popular Bert Schnick in tow, being too preoccupied with an issue of "Soap Opera Digest" to notice anything. "I'll come right to the point of this little get together. I assume that we all know that our rating points are down the toilet, and I assume we all know that our profit shares are almost non-existent. Now, I'm not going to put the blame on anybody. At least, nobody in this room. But let me tell you, friends, that the demon 'sweepweeks' is coming, and we don't seem to have a defense! But am I worried, boys and girls? Am I shakin' in my boots? To put it simply, no. Do you want to know why? The people these days don't know what's real from what's fantasy. Their senses have been eroded and numbed by the media. That's why they thought more about 'Who Shot J.R.?' than who their next president was going to be. Is it any wonder that they elected an actor? They're confused by all the violence in the movies! In the news! Four color shootouts on all channels! Fact or fiction? Check your T.V. Guide. That's why violence, like sex, excites their negated minds. For a few seconds, they actually feel something. Something that resembles emotion!"

Suddenly, Cosmos stood up and adjusted his glasses. "Will you get to the point, man?!"

Farley slowly looked across the room (damn screens were out again) straight at him. "Election year is approaching. Senator Bluto Blutarski is running for President. He will be making a tour of the state ending at a gala at Faber University."

"So?"

"So D.T.V. will be the only station there to carry live - the assassination of presidential candidate Bluto Blutarski!"

## NETWORK II

### Part Two:

"...and I'm not gonna take it any longer!"

It took an acquired taste to watch the "Gerry Todd Show". On every weekday morning at 8:30, it would seem to be an inopportune time slot to have a two hour "video showcase." However, even this would have been acceptable over a period of time if it were not for Gerry Todd's incredibly bizarre taste in music.

Lola Heatherton on a double bill with the Ramones. An all Slim Whitman video festivale -- and so on. Interspread amongst the video menagerie, Gerry would attempt to do small, five minute interviews with the various (ahem) artists that he would feature on that day's show. If one had a group that was just starting out and were lucky enough (or unlucky enough, depending on one's point of view) to land a spot on the show, it meant an extra ten bucks in the pocket and a free plug for the band. On this particular morning, Gerry would be interviewing Oscar Drill and the Bits, with special guest star Bluto Blutarski. Senator Bluto Blutarski. Presidential candidate Bluto Blutarski. The Bluto Blutarski who never even heard of Oscar Drill and was frankly too old for the Bits.

"What was he doing on the show?" "My P.R. directors said that it would be good for my image."

\*\*\*\*\*

At exactly 9:01 A.M., Brad Majors stood in the hallway of the Melonville Hilton in his bathrobe beating on the door of one Kip Wilson and one Henry Desmond, issueing threats of impending death. If looks could kill, half of Ohio would be a crater.

Finally, the door opened and a totally preoccupied Kip Wilson stuck his head out with a phone receiver under his chin. "Oh, hi."

"What is the senator doing on that show?!"

He squinted at the Magnavox. "The Pogo, I think."

Brad raised his finger as if he was about to say something, but then lowered it, as if thinking better of it, turned around and marched back down the hall toward his room.

Kip was still squinting at the T.V. set. "Or is it the Swim?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Guy Caballero sat in his office for over three hours studying the demographics for S.C.T.V.'s audience rating and came to one conclusion; they sucked prune twinkies.

Nielson time was coming and he had nothing to fall back on. How could someone pull out all the stops when all the stops had already been pulled out? Suddenly, the door to his office was flung open and Bob and Doug McKensie piled inside. Something was obviously on their minds.

\*\*\*\*\*

If someone were to say that the lobby of Delta House looked like a bomb had hit it, they would have been right. Not that it hadn't always looked this way. It was just that for the past twentyfour hours nuclear hobbyist Kay Rambo was working on a fireworks display for the upcoming "raid." And she frequently made a habit of testing her theories before practical application.

Meanwhile, Delta Prez Madam Riff Randall was busily teaching her consort, Tom Roberts, how to do the "Bluto," and was making little progress. "Riff, is this really necessary?"

"Aw c'mon Thomas, where's your fraternity spirit? Your sense of camaraderie? Your sis-boom-bah?"

"Please. I just ate."

"Party pooper."

\*\*\*\*\*

What do you give the man who has everything? That's what D-Day asked himself. That's what led him to the men's room at the student development center. That's what led him to the third stall on the right. And that's what the secretary at the desk wanted to know. "What is the nature of your visit?"

"Cars."

"And your name?"

"D-Day. Just D-Day."

Suddenly, a mysterious voice echoed from the bathroom stall. "It's all right, Miss Golightly, I'll see him."

The secretary then issued D-Day a temporary pass and waved him on. Reluctantly, he entered the stall and closed the door behind him. "Well, well, if it isn't everybody's favorite live-in legend and self-proclaimed perpetual student. And what may I do for you, Mr. D-Day?"

"Stow it, Eaglebower, or I'll plug the toilet with your ass. I hear you do 'favors.'"

"It's a living. I believe you said something about cars?"

"You ever hear of the Deathmobile?"

"Ahhh yes. Almost as big a campus legend as you are. You want it restored, I take it, for the upcoming festivities?"

"No. I want it found."

"Say what?"

"I misplaced it. I can't remember exactly when; '69, I think."

"Oh my. Haven't you ever gone looking for it?"

"Yeah, a couple of times. I sent a scouting party out for it about six months ago. I haven't heard from them since." D-Day then pulled out a cigarette and lit it, throwing the match over the stall door. The secretary yelped. "As much as I hate to admit it, you're my last hope. You think you can do it?"

Eaglebower leaned back and thought a moment. D-Day, meanwhile, was growing understandably impatient. Smiling, Eaglebower stood up and shook his hand. "Will that be cash or credit card?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The cages of Denton Vale were empty, its rubber rooms long since unused. The inmates had left, leaving its keepers to their folly. The faith factory had shut down. Only the office of Cosmo and Nation McKenly was still in operation, and it was Farley Flavors who was doing the operating. And Cosmo did not like it one bit. He protested that he would play no part of Farley's mad scheme. But he protested to deaf ears.

Farley just sat there, smug. A cold chill ran down Cosmo's back. He was going to do it. The madman was actually going to do it. It was already too late.

\*\*\*\*\*

"And a good, good morning to everybody. I'm the Doctor, and this is mighty 'KRP, and we're both good for what ails ya. Coming up a little later, we'll be talkin' with everybody's favorite hosebrains, Bob and Doug McKensie. (Aw, howdja guess?) But 'til then, let the Doctor prescribe you some 'teenage lobotomy'!"

Little is known about disc jockey John Cassavetes, aka, Johnny Fever. Not even those closest to him at the station know everything. Some say he's running from his past, from the law, from reality. He's not totally sure himself.

"Uh, Johnny? I've got a little problem; can you break away for a second? I need your help in the lobby." Bailey Quarters, on the other hand, is an open book. College graduate and publicity manager for W.K.R.P., she is outspoken on several issues, including the dangers of nuclear power and the protection of endangered species (she's against one, for the other). She is also kindhearted and generous and could give receptionist Jennifer Marlowe a run for her money on a good night. She also underexaggerates a bit.

"Mr. Caballero didn't believe us --sniff -- nobody believes us. What're we gonna do?"

"Aw, Geez, don't cry, eh? It'll be all right...." Bob and Doug McKensie were staggering about the lobby, thoroughly hosed and bawling their guts out. They had informed Guy Caballero earlier that day of the nefarious plot they had overheard at D.T.V., only to be accused of "paying Milwaukee's taxes" once too often (which is what they wound up doing).

"Bailey, they're in no condition to go on the air--."

"I know that, Johnny. I also know why they're in that condition. They say someone -- I haven't made out who -- is trying to kill the Senator!"

"Whose Senator?"

"Our Senator."

"Our -- Bailey, these guys are drunk! I mean, they're bombed! We're talking Hiroshima here!"

"But-- ."

"We'll put them on a bus for home. And I'll play their album instead. Nobody'll know the difference."

"They have no reason to lie."

"I never said they were lying. Bailey, did I say they were lying? Look, where is this supposed to happen?"

"The fund raiser at Faber University next week."

"And how do the Hardy boys know about that?"  
"I don't know...."  
"Uh huh."  
"I haven't asked!"  
"All right, all right. You say that they say that it's gonna happen at the politico at Faber. Right?"  
"Yes...."  
"Okay, our station is supposed to cover that, right?"  
"Well, yes...."  
"OK. If you still think by that time that something fishy is going on, we'll put Les on it. There's nobody I know who's more conspiracy crazy than Les Nessman. We aim him in the right direction and he'll eat 'em up like Inky, Blinky, and Clyde. But until then, Nancy Drew, don't say a word of this to anyone, understand?"

In the time it would take for Bailey to reply, Johnny Fever was back at his post, minding his own business. Bailey was still concerned with Bob and Doug, however, and decided that she would take them to her apartment to dry out before sending them home.

That's another thing about Bailey. She's constantly taking in strays.

"Maybe she believes us, eh?"

"Maybe. Gimme a smoke."

\*\*\*\*\*

At exactly 12:45 A.M., Janet Majors stood in the hallway of the Melonville Hilton, fully clothed, beating on the door of one Kip Wilson and one Henry Desmond, pleading for help. The people across the hall were beginning to wonder what was going on.

Finally, the door opened and a totally disheveled Henry Desmond stuck his head out. "Hmmm?"

"You've got to help me!! Please!"

Seeing the sincerely distraught look on Janet's face, Henry quickly stepped back and motioned her inside. "What's the matter?"

"It's Brad --." Janet choked on the words, waking Kip up instantly.

"Heyyy! What's going on?"

"My Brad! He's missing!"

\*\*\*\*\*

The last thing that Brad remembered was that Janet had just gone down to complain about the room service (or the lack thereof) when the phone rang, and he ran over to answer it. (He had visions of Senator Blutarski calling to say he was quitting politics to become a roadie for the Grateful Dead.) Suddenly, everything kind of skipped around, like a badly edited movie. He now found himself gagged and bound to a wheelchair in an all too familiar pink rubber room, confronted by his insidious twin brother, Farley Flavors. There just had to have been a mixup in the maternal ward.

"Good evening, my dear sibling. And how are you feeling tonight?"



"Mmph, mmph."

"Just fine, myself, thank you. You're more than probably wondering how you got here."

"Mmph, mmph."

"Of course you are. You see, when you picked up your end of the line, I set off this little beauty --," Farley then reached into his pocket and pulled out what looked like a miniature tuning fork. "It's called a 'sonic inducer'. It's a device which is capable, I'm told, of breaking down all conscious resistance, thereby rejecting it from the 'id' and, who knows, perhaps even the mind itself. You never had a chance!" Farley grinned. That should impress the wimp! "All I had to do after that was simply command you to drive over here. Simple, no?"

Brad struggled madly to get loose from the wheelchair, but the bindings were just too tight. "Mmph! Mmph!"

"Tsk, tsk, such manners! What would Janet say?" Farley laughed. A cold laugh, one that would've made Charles Manson cringe. "Anyway, I can't tell you what I'm going to use you for -- you'll find that out soon enough."

Suddenly, Farley stuffed a set of plugs in his ears and once more set off the inducer -- the sound growing louder every second. "Besides, what's life without a little mystery?"

In the dimmest reaches of his mind, Brad made a note to cancel his subscription to T.V. Guide.



"Ok, our topic for t'day  
is, like, Moosehead VS  
Saurian Brandy..."

"Like, I  
think it's  
a tie, eh?"

## NETWORK II

### Part Three:

"We are not strangers to confusion."

Barth Gimble was a creep. Everybody knew it. The audience knew it. He knew it.

Maybe that was why people kept tuning in. Perhaps they wanted to see just how big of a creep Barth could be. Indeed, along with the "Mao-Tse Tung Power Hour" and "The David John Deggr Show," "America 2-Nite" was one of U.B.S.'s biggest pulls. And that was not to say that Jerry Hubbard did not make a major contribution, being a total idiot as Barth's cohost.

And the night Bluto Blutarski (with aides Janet Majors and Henry Desmond) guested was no exception. Barth quickly made a point of backsliding Henry for forgetting that the show was no longer broadcast from Fernwood, Ohio, but from Tacoma, California - "An honest mistake. You take the wrong offramp and before you know it --."

Jerry made several stupid jokes with reference to Senator Blutarski's name - "Who are you running against, 'Popeye' Kennedy?" And both made ill attempts at subtly propositioning Janet. She didn't notice, however. Her mind was elsewhere.

Barth knew this, too, for every time he asked her a question, she would say, "Come again?" To which he would reply, "Probably." Or, "You're too kind."

To which Bluto promptly belted him in the jaw.

To which all hell broke loose.

To which, more people tuned in.

Score another rating point for the Union Broadcast System.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bob McKensie's mouth felt like a drain pipe with the garbage disposal backed up. Doug McKensie's, however, tasted of Drano.

That was their first reaction upon consciousness. Their sceond reaction was more of a mutual concern. Where were they? Some terrible things came to mind as they recalled the nastier episodes of "The Prisoner." However, as they soon found out, where they were was a nice, cozy, three room apartment leased by a certain Bailey Quarters, public relations person for a greater metropolitan radio station.

Eventually, as they crawled off the living room sofa, something occurred to them. The motivation behind their getting wasted in the first place.

-And they would have done so again, had it not been for Bailey, armed with two pots of fresh black coffee and an open mind.

Soon the terror and frustration of the past twentyfour hours came pouring out of the brothers in distraught, but nontheless sober, coherent words. (Well, as coherent as Bob and Doug could get). Here they were, on top of the worst thing to happen to Ohio since "Kent State," and nobody, not anybody, believed them. That is, until now.



"I never voted for him. It's not that I disliked him, or his politics -- he has done some good things for the state-- it's that he's always been just another name on the news now and then (Les always pronounces it Pluto Plutarski). That's why it's so hard for me to imagine someone actually wanting to kill him. But it's like I told Johnny, you have no reason to lie, and that's good enough for me!"

After bearing many hours of hardship, the brothers McKensie finally heaved a huge sigh of relief. Shortly thereafter, however, one of them let slip, "Like, what'll we do now?"

Bailey frowned. Just what were they going to do? It was enough to make Pollyanna do drugs.

\*\*\*\*\*

The night was a disaster. Not only were they absent-mindedly booked on a show as about out of state as it can get draining what campaign funds they had for roundtrip airfare, but a riot broke out and the Senator was made a fool of on (what turned out to be) nationwide television. Remorseful and crestfallen, Henry Desmond was the first to head for the studio door. He never made it to the other side.

"Ramming-Speed!!"

Out of nowhere, a curiously enthusiastic (an understatement) Kip Wilson came bursting through the studio door. Accidentally knocking Henry down (read that 'across the room'), he proceeded to make a spectacle of himself (also an understatement). Henry and the others were quite taken aback (to say the least).

"What have you been smoking, refabricated vinyl?"

"What are you talking about, you were great!!"

"What are you talking about?! We were publicly humiliated out there! That guy was lewd, rude and sarcastic. I'm surprised the Senator didn't slug the geek earlier!"

"I know, I know, he was great!"

"Great? The minute we did anything, the audience rallied like a pack of Polish Solidarity members and stormed the stage. I haven't seen that much violence since the day Amy found out they took the gumball machine out of the hotel lobby."

"I know! Wasn't it great?!"

"Will you quit saying that? You're beginning to sound like you're peddling breakfast cereal."

It was not until after a few more moments of such verbal confusion that Senator Blutarski adequately summed up the apparent lack of communication - "What the cheez whiz are you guys talking about?"

As it turned out, what the +Ahem+ Kip Wilson was talking about was the fact that Senator Blutarski punched out U.B.S.'s answer to the Marquis DeSade (namely Barth Gimble), defending the honor of a young lady (namely Janet). To which a long repressed people (namely the audience) rebelled and attacked the symbol of their vented repression (namely the stage).

"If this doesn't boost the Senator in the popularity polls, I'll donate my Kajunga's to science."

Suddenly, as if to vindicate Kip's testimonial, the show's

musical director, "Happy", entered the waiting room and briskly shook Senator Blutarski's hand, smiling a mile wide (being true to his namesake for perhaps the first time in his career). "I've wanted to do that for years. You're a great man, Senator, and you'll certainly get my vote. Uh- can I have your autograph?"

Kip's reaction to this incident was, of course, a typical "see-what-did-I-tell-you" smugness. Henry and the Senator reacted exactly as if they had discovered that God wore a leisure suit. "So tell me, Hank, m'boy, why don't we change our name to something like 'Politicians-R-Us'...."

\*\*\*\*\*

D-Day was speechless. He awoke that morning to sounds of rejoicing coming from the courtyard below. Curious, he peered out of his bedroom window to find a small group of Deltans crowded around what had to be a spit and polished Deathmobile. No explanations. No clues. Nothing. It was just there. He was beginning to wonder just how resourceful Mr. Eaglebower was. The kid could probably find Amelia Earhart if he thought he could turn a profit from it.

\*\*\*\*\*

Brad was close to giving up. He thought that he was finally past all the "why-mes" in his life, that all the frustrations, inflicted and otherwise, were behind him. Now, he sat, bound and gagged, staring at the four pink padded walls that imprisoned him.

What hypocrisy, he thought. As if pink made everything all right, that nothing was wrong, that everybody got to have warm milk and cookies before bedtime.

A spoonful of sugarmakes the medicine go down.

It was as if Fate had a personal vendetta against him. He lost his parents when he was but four years of age, he flunked out of High School when he was fifteen due to a chronic case of insecurity. At twentyfour, he and his then soon-to-be-bethrothed were both seduced by a transvestite from outer space on what was to be the night before their wedding, only two years ago his life and marriage nearly fell apart, showcased like a cheap soap opera on a T.V. game show in his home town, to which he was thereby sentenced to Denton Vale, an insane asylum run by two two-bit character actors.... Only to discover that the game show was rigged by his long lost evil twin brother Farley Flavors. But even through all of that, he somehow survived. He and his mate became political aides to a United States Senator, they bought a beautiful new home in their state's capitol, and were happier than they had been perhaps in their entire marriage.

And now this.

What was the use of continuing the fight? One can get back up and brush one's self off only so many times.

Slowly, his eyes drifted back to the clock on the eastern wall.

Damn.

He was missing 'Hill Street Blues."

\*\*\*\*\*

Denton was D.T.V.

Or, to be more precise, D.T.V. was Denton.

To extrapolate: back in the mid-nineteen sixties, in the last (but not final) great surge of television as a direct influence on the American life style, Denton was a dying town. Never really a tourist spot, and with no real industry to support it, if it were to survive, something had to be done.

Something was.

Within two years, construction had begun on "The Studio," the industry's first fully self-contained, operational television/media complex. Twice as big as any other network studio of the time, it was actually bigger than the town of Denton itself. And with the latest "state of the art" technology and a security system that matched Fort Knox, D.T.V. Studio was the single most impregnable structure since Masada.

Then why would a nice, sensible, clean cut young woman like Bailey Quarters try to sneak in unnoticed? To tell the truth, she was not quite sure herself. "I don't like this, I don't want this. I don't need this. I'm not Mata Hari. I'm not Emma Peel. I'm not even Nancy Drew! What am I doing here?!!"

After a successful entry (she flirted with a security guard whil Doug snuck up from behind and knocked the guy out with a one pound slab of backbacon that Bob kept in a freezer inside his van), she then set about searching for possible clues (although she wasn't sure what they'd be) to substantiate Bob and Doug's story that station manager Farley Flavors was going to have (for whatever reasons) Ohio state Senator Bluto Blutarski assassinated.

She was more than just a little nervous. Being in public relations for a radio station doesn't quite prepare one for high risk investigational work. She wasn't even getting paid to do this. "Where's John Steed when you need him?"

\*\*\*\*\*

The Denton Dossier had become the Fernwood File, as it had done so many times before. The local U.B.S. affiliate in Fernwood, Ohio snapped up what shows D.T.V. threw out, and made them their own. So when the Honorable Judge Oliver Wright and the lovely Ms. Betty Hapschatt came to Fernwood television, they were joined by a third party in the personage of Fernwood's own Loretta June Haggars, former cross over country and western music star and T.V. personality. Oliver thought she was amusing. Betty's thoughts were less congenial, "Jezebel!"

"What'd she do now, Betty...?"

"The little asp snatched my lead intro and wrapup spots out from under me, Oliver! And even that wouldn't bother me so much, I'm used to that. It's how she did it, Oliver! Do you want to know how she did it, Oliver?"

"How, Betty?"

"She sweet talked the director into it! She practically

threw herself on the poor man. And in front of everyone!"

"Now, now, don't you think you're over-exaggerating just a bit?"

"I do not. Besides, I've seen how she makes cow's eyes at you."

"Me?"

"Oh, I don't mind. I mean, what girl could resist those deep blue eyes, that chiseled jaw, the special charisma that only comes with experience...."

"Betty! She's a married woman!"

"I know! It's one thing to forget herself on the job, but what if she forgets herself on the air? I'm only thinking of the show...."

"Betty, I do believe you're jealous!"

Thus was the relationship of Oliver Wright and Betty Hapschatt. They shared conversation, a dressing room, and a hit T.V. show (but not, obviously, the same point of view).

"So what's tonight's topic?"

"Not bad really. We'll be asking why a politician becomes a politician. That's like asking Macey Struthers if she pads her bra. She'd might say no, but you'd never believe it. What's it called?"

"Blutarski's Brain. We'll be interviewing our beloved Senator as part of the program."

"Wait a second, don't Brad and Janet work for his office?"

"Ahh, yes. As political advisors, I believe...."

"Do you think they might have come along?"

"I don't see why not."

"Oh, good. It's been such a long time since we've seen them. Two years...."

Then, as if on cue, a knock sounded on the dressing room door (pure coincidence). "Who is it?"

"It's Janet. Janet Majors."

\*\*\*\*\*

A well-tailored Senator Blutarski sat in his dressing room alone, staring at his freshly made-up, camera-ready face, feeling suddenly very confused and fearfully very, very old. What was he doing here? Why was he doing this? At one time he could command the attention of an entire state. Now he doubted that he could attract the attention of a philodendron.

What went wrong? Where was the young rebel terror of days since past? Where was the campus demon? The fraternity underdog? The one voted "most likely to overthrow a third world country"?

The it hit him.

He wasn't in college anymore. Maybe that was why he was running for President. Maybe it was his last chance to still be noticed.

Even Rock 'N Roll was becoming obsolete.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bailey was getting hyper. She had the distinct feeling of being watched, yet she was sure that nobody was following her. The last time she had felt that way was when Johnny Fever

took her to see "Psycho," at a midnight showing. (The next morning she put a padlock on her shower door.) The other thing that was bothering her was that everyplace, even the medical ward, looked like a television or movie set. Some rooms didn't even have roofs, revealing original parts of a soundstage. And everything, everything, had a D.T.V. symbol stamped on it.

It was creepy.

(Now that was a "Johnny" line if she ever heard one.

"Commercialism is creepy. Film at Eleven.")

Suddenly she heard a low, muffled groan coming from the terminal ward. Cautiously, she crept forward. As she approached, she could also hear someone talking. It was faint, at first, but as she got closer, she recognized it immediately. It was Farley Flavors.

"Demographics, dear brother, it's all just demographics. Profit shares, rating points.... They are as familiar to your profession as mine. After all, aren't we both basically doing the same thing? I mean, you're trying to sell a product, and so am I. We both depend upon the popularity of our product, and in both cases there is the danger of competition." Farley paused briefly to consider his next words, then suddenly burst into insane laughter. "However, in your case, dear brother, cancellation can be a bit more resolute!"

He was mad all right. Madder than Richard Simmons at a Pillsbury bakeoff, and twice as dangerous.

And that was all the evidence Bailey needed.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is a well known fact from the outer colonies of Betelgeuse to the ghettos of Transexual, that going without any sleep for more than five consecutive days is equal to drinking two Pangalactic Gargleblasters with a Celestial Hemmorage chaser. For the past five and a half days, from the moment of her husband's mysterious disappearance, Janet Majors had drunk more coffee than is humanly feasible, smoked more cigarettes than the combined city of Cleveland, and had taken more uppers than Mary Hartman on a bad night (love is not blind, it is just a little klutzy). And so, it is little wonder that when Betty Hapschatt flung open her dressing room door to greet Janet, her oldest and dearest friend, Janet, her oldest and dearest friend, collapsed on the dressing room table.

A six pack of smelling salts later, Janet began to explain the circumstances that had brought her to such a condition.

"Brad was last seen in the lobby of the Melonville Hilton. He just got into the stationwagon and drove off. I've got an uncle who is the chief of police there. He says they're doing everything they can...."

"What singular behavior...."

Oliver Wright felt uneasy. He wasn't quite sure whether it was his own personal instinct, or that he had been reading too much Perry Mason, but he was positive that the situation had something to do with the Senator and his bid for the Presidency. But what he couldn't say. Nor did he get a chance to; enter Mrs. Loretta June Haggars, unannounced and

unavoidable, exuding enough charm to fertilize the moon.

"HI YALL!"

"Oh God...."

"Betty...."

"And this must be Janet. Oh, honey, I just heard all about the situation from the Senator (I thought it would be nice for me to stop by and say hello and make him feel welcome. Why he's such a cutie pie.), anyway he's just so worked up about the whole thing (and he's really worried about you, honey. Why, you're the apple of his eye. He told me he thought of you as the daughter he never had)."

"Really?"

"He sure did. Now, sugar, you've just gotta stop tearin' yourself up like this (it ruins the complexion). Don't you think that if your hubby was on the bottom of some lake or something gross like that, you would've known about it by now?"

"Well...."

"Of course you do. And you know, if he's anything like Charlie (that's my betrothed), he probably just had to run an errand or something and made a wrong left turn somewhere and got lost."

"He was in unfamiliar surroundings...."

"That's a girl! Now you're cookin'! Just think those good thoughts and he'll wind up on your doorstep wearin' a smile!"

"I think I'm going to be sick...."

"Betty...."

"Well, I've got to get ready for the show (I'm introducing tonight!), so I'd better say TA for now."

"Bye."

"Yeah, so long...."

Almost as suddenly as she entered, Loretta June was gone, leaving behind the smell of drugstore perfume.

"She seems to be real nice."

"I know. That's her problem...."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Gimme a beer."

"Like, you made sure her walkie-talkie was working?"

"Ya. Gimme a beer."

"An' did you, did you put new batteries in it?"

"You saw me. Gimme a beer."

"What about the flashlight?"

"Ya. Ya. Ya. I checked all a'that. Gimme a beer, eh?"

"Can't."

"Why not?"

"You drank the last one."

"Oh."

Bob and Doub McKensie had been impatiently waiting for Bailey Quarters in their van outside the gates of D.T.V. Almost three hours had passed and they were getting a little itchy. That, plus the fact that they had a security guard tied up in the back didn't help matters any.

"You sure he won't get loose?"



"Like, no way, eh. I used a triple infinity knot."  
"Ya. That was neat. Where'd ya learn that?"  
"Omniversalism One on One in Boy Scouts...."  
"Wow...."

\*\*\*\*\*

In 1976, Howard Beale, 'The Mad Prophet of the Airways' was assassinated on live nationwide television by the 'People's Communist Revolutionary Army.' Shortly thereafter, the late Mr. Beale's boss, the late Mr. Jensen (President of the Union Broadcasting System) died of a cardio-vascular stroke brought on by stress due to impending network bankruptcy. Now enter General D.W. Ungerwitter, war hero and self-made millionaire, who single-handedly pays off all network debts and eventually puts U.B.S. back in first place (of the three minor television networks). As president of U.B.S., General Ungerwitter has had to make many decisions, not all of them easy, not all of them right. On this day, the General has to make probably the most difficult decision in his entire career: to replace his network's equivalent of David Letterman (which may not sound like much, but to a fourth banana like U.B.S. it's heaven-sent) during the height of the ratings period (war IS hell).

"I'm shipping you back to Fernwood, soldier."

"What?!"

"I'm pulling you out, Gimble. You made a major strategical error this week. H.Q. is not pleased."

"You mean the C.C.A.? What'd I do?"

"Let's just say that you are the first casualty in the ratings war. The only honorable campaign left is to discharge you from services rendered."

"But-"

"Oh, I could see it coming for a long time now. The natives got restless, started turning against the home front. You insult one of their symbols and they throw stones at you. Ratings stones."

"Say what?"

"Your ratings are shot, Gimble. A U.H.F. test pattern has a higher rating than you! When you crossed with that Senator, you marked your own spot at Arlington. Am I clear?"

"...yessir...."

"I can't HEAR you!"

"Yes-SIR!"

"I can't HEAR YOU!"

"YES-SIR!"

"Yes sir, what?"

"YES SIR, I understand you, SIR!"

"DIS-MISSED!"

With this, Barth Gimble meekly backed out of the office, his tail dragging between his legs. Well, there went the condo in Enceno....

\*\*\*\*\*

Johnny Fever was worried.

Everyone was worried. Bailey had not come in that morning



and there was no answer on her phone. Johnny was beginning to envision all sorts of improbably nasty things, and Les Nessmen was believing every one of them. Andy Travis kept checking with the police and Jennifer Marlowe kept calling the area hospitals. The police said that they couldn't declare anyone missing until after fortyeight hours and the hospitals said that no one had been admitted in the past nine hours fitting Bailey's description. That should have helped some, but it didn't.

"Andy, what're we going to do about the interview with the two Senatorial aides?"

"What do you mean, John?"

"I was supposed to do it with Bailey. She was supposed to ask the heavy questions, and I was supposed to ask things like, 'Is it true the Senator once blew up a Sears?'"

"Well, why don't we use Les?"

"Are you kidding? My God, Andy, he pronounces the man's name Pluto Plutarski! We could get executed by the Democratic Party!"

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As the crew of Cincinnati's third highest rated radio station twittled their thumbs and paced about, the two Senatorial aides that Johnny Fever had mentioned were entering the building. They were Mrs. Janet Majors and Mr. Kip Wilson, who had something of a missing persons problem themselves (pure coincidence #2).

"I really don't feel like doing this...."

"I know, but this is the last time we'll have to do any campaigning. After the interview, we hop just one more jet and join Henry and the Senator at Faber."

"You know, Oliver said that Brad's disappearance might have something to do with the Senator's campaign...."

"He what? No offense, Jan, but that guy has a Nero Wolfe complex. He probably drinks cooking sauce and collects violets. Besides, how can you trust a guy with no neck? Echh."

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Almost no one at S.C.T.V. seemed to have noticed that Bob and Doug McKensie had been missing for over two days, nor did they probably care. Station manager Edith Prickley noticed, however, and it was her job to care. The two minutes that Bob and Doug spent were needed to fill the time between "The Fishin' Musician" and the ever popular "Farm Film Report." Otherwise, the station would have to scrounge up commercials to replace the gap (and S.C.T.V. did not have that many sponsers). "I don't know where they could have gone, Guy. They live here at the studio. We don't pay them enough to buy a place...."

"I don't see what you're so worried about. We've got guest hosts for the show."

"Yeah, but Lola Heatherton and Liza Mannetti discussing how to prepare quiche just doesn't have the same ambiance. Besides, we have to pay them extra."

"Call the F.B.I.! Call the C.I.A.! We've got to find

those boys!" (Of course, everyone knew he was going to say that.)

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The interview was dismal. Everyone just sat staring at one another for half an hour (This could have been attributed to the fact that both interviewer and interviewee had been preoccupied with other matters. And since communication was at such a minimum, the fact that both parties were preoccupied with similar matters was never brought up.). Suddenly, with a sense of timing that would have done Henry proud, the brothers McKensie burst into the small radio booth, panting and gasping, trying to talk.

"They got HER!!"

"What?!"

"Who?"

"Miss Bailey. She's been KIDNAPPED!"

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Kay Rambo and Riff Randall stood before the recently completed podium and fireworks display, admiring the results of their handywork. Yeah, that night's rally was really gonna make HISTORY....

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To Be Continued ....



# Spy'n Drifts

Wynter Tydes  
2925A Soledad  
Irving, TX 75062

Edd Vick -

Dear Susan,

Wynter Tydes is good. You know my opinion of it. Your editorials set a definite mood for me; they help me put away the world and all its cares and prepare to read some outstanding fiction.

Your contents page is very plain, as is to some extent the whole zine. Some thought to graphics would help immensely. More on that in a minute. The artist credits neglect to mention the cover artist (you). Whassa-matter, you shy?

It's nice to see your trade terms on page 3, maybe you'll work up a subscription price soon...

'The Perfect Assassin' was good. K. (another shy one?) lends a cinematic feel to the story, keeping it moving at all costs. I hope to see more of Foxfire.

'Romany Tale' was well written, but boring (to me). I have the impression that I have read this story or something very similar to it many times. Some of the logic was unclear. A pentagram forms on Tye's hand? Is it a sign that he has been rendered inviolate?..or that he will become another Tunk (that's a silly name, by the way)?

'Bad Con' seems to be an outgrowth of the jokes Kathy submitted to MU. It's nice, though, to see new definitions of a bad con and the 'livening up' is hilarious. More from Kathy!

'Till Death Do Us Part' is another of those cliched stories. The humor carries it along, though, so I can't criticize it too much, except to say that it ran a trifle long. And what's all this white space on page 26? Couldn't you have wheedled some piece of art

from somebody? If nothing else, you could have shot down (ie reduced) "Temporal Shadows" from the next page (which probably would have made it look nicer anyway) and put it there. Of course, that would then leave you with a full page to fill...

Which brings me to 'The Meantime'. You're probably cringing in anticipation of a scathing review, since I told you I didn't like prose stories featuring superheroes. You see, whenever I run across a prose story with same, it is usually done badly. Normally it's written by a fan of the character who adds nothing to the characters involved. The author normally presents a fight scene with little motivation (or one so overblown it's ridiculous... "You killed my dog, you..."). Often there is no attempt to write a full story, a vignette suffices, or the fan realizes that he is pushing after four pages of fight scene. OK, so I reacted badly to your first X-Men story. I'm sorry, but I believe that my reason are valid. You told little of Gypsy (What's that? You were saving the story for this issue? Aha!). My impression was that she was a Kitty-clone with Wolverine's temper and a little knack with knives. Now I know better. I thought you were just adding her to be able to say that you had created an X-Man. I'm still not too sure on that account. But at least you've explained her powers a bit better (another normally expected problem).

At least your characters are not cardboard, you're infusing them with a little life and allowing them to grow and change (some) in the course of the stories. You wrote stories, not scenes or vignettes. I'd still rather see superheroes in comics rather than prose, but at least I don't feel your story is a waste of time. I am curious about one thing. You seem to have created an alternate world, one where Phoenix learned what she would become ahead of time. Am I right in assuming this? In other examples of Gypsy's power she has always acted within 'our' world-line. Is this to be supposed an outgrowth of Nightcrawler's power fusing with hers, or will she as a matter of course create alternate worlds? I suppose the answer to this will be, "She hasn't tested her powers fully, so nobody knows." Sounds good to me. I'll be along when she does find out.

Now about that graphics problem. Leafing through the issue, I find about seven and a half pages worth of white space (including the back cover). W.S. is fine sometimes, but I think you need to do something about it (not that I mean to be bossy or anything...). I know you are hurting for artwork, but better editing will solve much of your problem. Shooting down some of the artwork as needed and putting it in the blank space under stories will save you some pages (at least three, in this case (that's front and back)). The savings in printing costs alone make this attractive! My other big complaint is that the artwork is nonrepresentational. Let me make an example...er, 'take an example'. Your X-Men story 'The Meantime' (does that mean it was Phoenix's time to get mean?) (sorry) has some scenes that would make excellent drawings, like the scene near the end with Gypsy falling away from Phoenix.

Nowhere do we see any illustration obviously done for a story (The Avengers symbol for the poem was nice). I sat down a couple of days ago to do a drawing of Gypsy, but I got bogged down on her hair. If there had been an illo, I would have known how to draw it, but I went to the story instead. Let's see now, Page 28: Gypsy's curls. Good start. Is she curly all over, or just in places? Page 32: A description of her costume, nicely worked into the story-line. Page 33: So you did mention a different timestream. I must not have retained this before. Page 35: The dark child. Is Gypsy of Spanish descent? The name Mariana seems to suggest that. Perhaps the flamenco dancer look? Curly black hair. At least I know the color. I imagine her eyes are dark too. It would have been so much easier if there had been a (good) illustration.

Oh well, I wouldn't be happy if I didn't have something to carp about. Happy publishing!

(( Thanks for the kind words, Edd. And the story...And the letter...And the ad in MU...

Katie -K. Linden- sends her thanks and promises that Foxfire will return, eventually.

I'm trying to get more from Kathy, but she's donating to so many charities now...

You're right about the art problem. I need artwork **DESPERATELY!!!** Artists...? **HINT!!! HINT!!!!)**



